Section 3: Other Contacts Within the Sasembata District

628 As soon as we move beyond the closely allied villages, there is a sharp distinction between the behaviour appropriate with kinsmen or regular partners and friends resident in those villages, and the far more cautious and formal behaviour appropriate when dealing with all others. There are far fewer transactions between Sivepo and Isoge or Kendata than with Garoubi or Kongohambo, and other close villages. But I believe that the frequency of such contacts fluctuates according to contingencies. For instance, Isoge and Sivepo are now expected to cooperate in both church and [178] local government council activities. This is definitely a somewhat novel experience. One clear example can be given of the changes in attitude this has produced over the last 16 years.

797 When the Sasembata mission station was built in 1952-1953, 794 all the villages contained in the parish collaborated. Miss White's 628 diaries show how this cooperation was organised. Miss White, who was in charge of the station, arranged with leaders from each of the villages what tasks they would be responsible for. For instance, the nearby Sasembata village would build the teacher's house, Garoubi and Isoge would finish the hospital ward, Sivepo and Binduta would pull down the old pre-eruption Standard 1-3 classroom building, Duve and Totogota would finish the standard 4 building, Kongohambo build another schoolroom while Hamburata would cut and saw the wood for the desks. (28 December, 1952) Evidently, each group would work one day a week--and each group on a different day, as I understand.

653 The hospital building was duly finished in bush materials 628 and in 1966, while I was in the field, the time had come to pull it down and renew it. The Australian teacher in charge of the [751] station was unable to organise this work. There was, however, a Papuan medical assistant in charge of the hospital who was efficient and popular. On the occasion he treated the sore leg of a Sasembata man who was a carpenter. The man offered to build the assistant a "house," i.e., a hospital. He collected 20 men from Isoge, Garoubi, Sivepo, Binduta, Hamburata and his own village. Together they built the hospital in a few weeks, working together every day. Often there were more than 20. When it was finished, he did not think it was strong enough. It was pulled down and rebuilt with more substantial studs.

The main difference between the building programmes of 1952 and 1966 lies in the manner in which the work was organised. In 1952, the largest effective cooperating group was the village. The mission was able to draw on the services of several villages, but only if they worked separately. In 1966, an Orokaiva builder, drawn from one village, was able to control and lead the work of a group recruited from all the villages of the Northwestern half of the parish acting as a coordinated team.

654 and local field trials are being carried out on the volcanic soils
242 of the Northern District.

Agricultural extension work was being carried on by Australian officers stationed in Popondetta, with the help of Papuan agricultural
242 assistants some of whom were stationed in a sub-office in Saiho. It is this staff which has been responsible for the gradual increase in coffee plantings and the spreading of basic knowledge about coffee cultivation. We should not, however, minimise the extent of knowledge and stimulus that spread not through the activities of officials but was passed on from experienced Orokaiva growers to beginners. Furthermore, many persons trained as agricultural assistants have returned to their villages and became a fund of knowledge to those around them. The assistants are trained in a course of between nine and twelve
[879] months' duration, given at Popondetta. Papuans may also receive a full agricultural diploma course at a school near Keravat, New Britain, or a two-year sub-diploma course at a school near Keravat, New Britain, or a two-year sub-diploma certificate course given at Popondetta. Graduates from these schools were not yet working in the Northern District at the time of my visit.

No stabilisation fund for coffee exists in the Territory. The
435 violent fluctuations in price for this product do have a somewhat
245 unsettling effect on growers, though I could not observe very much of this as 1966-67 was a good year. I heard that in bad years in the near past people had been very disappointed. The problem of price fluctuations affects other tropical crops as well, and New Guinea has few sources of income which are significantly stabler than coffee. Therefore, no easy solution to this problem is possible. The Orokaiva Coffee Growers Society has been following a wise policy of withholding a substantial part of the proceeds in good years for capital improvement, thus providing a kind of cushion against fluctuations. Thus, in 1966-67, a substantial proportion of proceeds was withheld for improvements to the factory and trucks. Growers are paid an initial sum per pound substantially lower than the expected total proceeds, and the balance is in part distributed to shareholders at the end of the season, in part withheld. By this procedure, a substantial drop in export prices can be suffered without corresponding lowering of the initial cash payment. In 1966, the cash payment was $26 for a 150-pound sack.

A good deal of development work has been left for the Higaturu
657 Council to deal with. I have already mentioned that government officers
423 attempted to have the council deal with matters of land tenure improvement (though Port Moresby authorities overruled this) and that the coffee factory was planned as a council operation though again plans were changed later. In 1966, the main activities of the council were
653 in the building of roads, the improvement of water supplies, the building of medical aid posts, the maintaining of the produce markets at Popondetta and Saiho and some minor social services. (For details, see Table 12.)[A] Thus, a sizeable area of local development had become

A [See Cat. 116, p. 217--Analyst]

a council responsibility. While the rebuilding of the arterial road from Popondetta and Kokoda was an expensive (and seemingly interminable) responsibility of the government, the side roads became the council's responsibility. Similarly, the government built the major hospitals while the council looked after the village aid posts.

The council's revenue mainly came from taxes--a head tax of $8 for men and $1 for women. This is the only personal tax directly levied among Orokaiva village people and has replaced the government head tax. Its collection was not a government but a council responsibility, although defaulters could, of course, be brought before a magistrate and sentenced to a term in a government jail. Councillors explained to the villagers that the taxes they paid went to pay for their roads, aid posts, water supplies, etc. The government hoped that villagers would be more ready to pay their taxes if they could see tangible local benefits to justify them. One effect of the system was that villagers became very interested to see that as much as possible of the tax money should be spent in their own locality. They rapidly developed a strong propensity for parish-pump politics. When I visited Sasembata district first, there was little evidence of any council projects in the Sasembata wards. People objected to paying their taxes: they were not getting anything for them. Pressure resulted in roading improvements and plans for a comprehensive water supply for the area. Councillors who did not fight successfully for such causes were liable to miss re-election.

The head tax manifestly acted as a significant economic incentive. A man who grew no coffee and earned no money could not pay his tax. Even if a man could not be bothered harvesting all his coffee, he would certainly harvest enough to pay his tax. Some men who had no coffee took plantation jobs a month or two before the tax was due. I noticed this in two cases at Inonda; most of the Sivepa men had coffee gardens and did not need to work outside. For the first time, tax defaulters in 1966 were actually jailed for two months. In one village, Kondata, there were as many as 50 defaulters who fought the police and ran into the bush; in Sivepa there were four, all without coffee gardens.

In spite of this tension, people generally supported the ideology of the council: they wanted the "new age" and they wanted the kind of services that were supplied by the council. At the same time it was never forgotten that behind the tax-gathering councillors stood the government police, armed and ready to make arrests if the councillors were resisted or attacked, as sometimes happened. Those who did not pay and tried to escape arrests were judged by the conformists to be ignorant men, unwisely looking for trouble. On the other hand, people deeply sympathised with them. People wanted the "new age," but they did not like the element of compulsion that went with it. They re-elected the councillors who compelled them because they held the Australian authorities, not the councillors, to be directly responsible.

628 I found them elsewhere among the Orokaiva, it naturally became no easier for the mission station to lead the village.

758 759 During the time I was at Hohorita, there was no local medical service because the officer appointed by the Health Department was a Sangara who insisted that a house should be built for him before he arrived. (Orokaiva are bound by law to do such work, in payment for government services rendered.) His kinsmen at Hohorita thought that if he wanted a house, he should build it himself. The medical, however, was in no hurry at all to go home; he stayed at his previous post for almost a year after he should have been transferred. Hohorita complained to the Health authorities that they had no medical; they found that unless they built the house, no medical would be provided but they would have to go to Saiho for service. Finally they yielded. This was far from being a case of anomie: it was a battle about the status to be granted to public officials at Hohorita.

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653 In Sivepo, nobody would have questioned this status; they would have built a house at once for any public official who would have wanted to live there. But then, such a person would be bound to be a stranger, not a person "like themselves." When a village has produced a dozen or so public officials of one sort or another, the question begins to look different: what is so special about these people that we have to build houses for them? Furthermore, once upon a time, the Sangara working timetable was rather flexible, but with cashcropping on the Hohorita scale, and long walking distances between home and work, the Hohorita people were rather busy earning money from coffee. Time had become an economic resource.

This was a frequent subject of mild argument between me and the other expatriates. The expatriates used to complain that the Orokaiva were no longer willing to do any work (i.e., perform free services such as I am now discussing). They thought that if the Orokaiva were to advance economically, they would need to work much harder. I used to tease the other expatriates by saying that this growing reluctance to do free work for the government (roads, houses for officials, etc.) was evidence for the success of the economic development policy the expatriates claimed to be promoting. They thought this to be a sick joke.

173 In an earlier chapter, I already referred to an unusual foreshortening of Orokaiva history practised by Sangara informants of today. It is certainly remarkable that, according to Sangara, the Orokaiva only began to make feasts <u>after</u> the time of European contact, because earlier they could not grow enough food to hold them. Statements of this sort were made in two places (Sombou, Hohorita) by elders sitting together in groups and instructing me. I have already explained how such statements fit the traditional <u>structure</u> of Orokaiva history: original time / culture established by culture heroes / present day. As the coming of the Europeans occurred more than two generations ago, this event would seem to have been confused with the coming of the culture heroes. When I did, in a very innocent way, express my

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